



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Six Cases of Whooping Cough Confirmed in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – Since June 22, 2004, six cases of pertussis (whooping cough) have been confirmed in McLean, McHenry and Ward counties, according to Heather Weaver, Immunization Program manager for the North Dakota Department of Health. Two individuals are younger than 18, and four are older than 18. In addition, the Department of Health is investigating other possible cases that have not yet been diagnosed.

Whooping cough is a contagious disease that lasts for many weeks and causes severe coughing with a “whooping” sound or coughing that leads to vomiting. Young children can be vaccinated against the disease; however, the vaccine does not provide lifelong protection, and there is no vaccine for adolescents and adults.

“Because there is no vaccine for adolescents and adults, these groups often can transmit the disease to others,” Weaver said. “The Department of Health strongly encourages parents to make sure children who are younger than 7 have received at least four doses of whooping cough vaccine (DTaP vaccine).”

Adults, teens and vaccinated children who become infected with whooping cough often have mild symptoms that resemble bronchitis or asthma; as a result, the Department of Health is recommending that health-care providers consider whooping cough when evaluating any patient who has an illness with one or more of the following symptoms:

- Prolonged cough (lasting for a week or more)
- Long spells of coughing with spasms
- Coughing with a whooping sound
- Coughing that leads to gagging/vomiting

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“Whooping cough, which is often under diagnosed in North Dakota, can cause severe illness in infants and older adults who have existing respiratory disease,” Weaver said. “With summer gatherings and family reunions approaching, one person who has whooping cough could pass the disease to many family members and friends. We are hoping that bringing attention to the matter will help stop the spread of the disease.”

Anyone who has had a cough lasting for more than a week should see a physician to be evaluated for whooping cough. Antibiotics can be given to help stop the spread of the disease.

For more information, call the North Dakota Department of Health Division of Disease Control at 800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378.

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